

Mr. Walter R. Collins, editor
Notre Dame Magazine
Room 415 Main Building
Notre Dame University
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21701
12/6/88

Dear Mr. Collins,

A month ago I wrote you proposing several means of correcting the serious defamation of me and my work by your eminent emeritus, Prof. Vincent P. DeSantis, who distinguished himself by cribbing from a cribber to defame me. I regret that you have been silent and that you did not consult the professional historians to whom I referred you for an impartial judgement. I regret that, the eye surgery so fresh, I neglected to refer you to your own library, to the only bibliography on the assassination of President Kennedy by professors of history, Drs. Wrone and Guth, Greenwood Press.

I proposed two means of correcting this injustice and besmirching of history and historians, one that Professor DeSantis make his own rectification, the other, which at my age and in my condition I do not prefer, that you extend the same opportunity to me so that your own readers will not be so grossly misinformed about the assassination of our only Catholic President and its official investigations. I believe that your personal integrity and that of your university require no less.

Professor DeSantis cribbed his defmation of me from the cribber Professor Michael Kurtz, whose book was reviewed by the Journal of American History (copy enclosed). The reviewer is a professional historian who is also a lawyer, James Lesar. He states what is obvious from any reading the Kurtz triviality, that Kurtz does not know up from down, that he published falsehoods, that he omitted such basic facts of the assassination as the wounding of another person, still to be accounted for within the three shots permitted by the official mythology besides two ~~two~~ woundings of President Kennedy and five woundings of Governor Connally, and that contrary to its speculations and pontifications, brought nothing new to light. Most of what is not fantasy in it comes from my published work, which he misrepresents while cribbing it.

What an authority Professor Kurtz is - he "solves" the crime by stating that a shot that went upward after entering President Kennedy's back came from not below the point of entry in the back but from two stories up in the Texas School Book Depository Building - and this defiance of common sense when the President's limousine was going downhill, away from that building!

Mr. Lesar has a unique knowledge of the field. He has handled most of the Freedom of Information Act litigation that has brought to light what the government suppressed, including most of my own litigation through which I got the third of a million pages of records I referred to a month ago, a not inconsiderable archive already freely available to all and, I hope you will agree, a larger volume of information than is generally drawn upon by even the most eminent of professional historians, not at all the representation you gave your trusting readers, quite the opposite of the defamations I again ask you to correct.

I have for years helped other scholars, including even Pulitzer winners. One only this month received the prestigious Golden Eagle award in the history division of the CINE competition of documentaries. He is Gerard Selby, whose master's thesis it is. I am sure that either the A&E cable channel, which aired it twice last month, or he (Box 174, College Park, Md. 29740) will make it available to you. From it your and Professor DeSantis may learn a little about the assassination shooting, other than that what is fired downhill wounds uphill.

I would appreciate hearing from you and I again apologize for my typing when I can use only my poorer eye. Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg

Journal of American History

Book Reviews

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Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination from a Historian's Perspective. By Michael L. Kurtz. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982. xi + 291 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$17.50.)

In *Crime of the Century* Michael L. Kurtz laments that "professional scholars" have neglected the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; he also disparages the works of Warren Commission critics for their "obvious bias" and lack of "the careful analysis of objective evidence that characterizes the scholar." Having set the stage for his own entry, Kurtz announces "an original interpretation based on carefully calculated scrutiny of the most reliable and convincing sources" and promises "much new evidence." He vows to avoid speculation because it "is not within the realm of the historian."

Kurtz concludes from his examination of the evidence that there clearly was a conspiracy to kill Kennedy and that the probes of the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations were seriously flawed. Although these conclusions cannot be faulted, there is virtually nothing of any consequence in this book that is new. With minor exceptions, its valid points derive from the very critics Kurtz deprecates. For example, Kurtz relies heavily on the work of Harold Weisberg and offers little information that Weisberg has not previously revealed.

This book lacks scholarship. The author makes blatant factual mistakes and important errors of omission: Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* (1966) is not the first book on the subject; the wounding of James Tague is totally ignored. There are falsehoods: the Warren Commission was not "[u]naware of the FBI's real attitude toward it"; to the contrary, its members stated in their secret sessions that the FBI "would like to have us fold up and quit," and they also asserted that the FBI had concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin without having "run out all kinds of leads." Kurtz relies on commission testimony by an FBI agent contradicted by FBI records and on the results of tests performed for the House committee on evidentiary items inexplicably different in size, shape, and weight from the original FBI specimens without evincing any awareness of the discrepancies. The book's footnotes retard rather than advance scholarship: they generally do not support the assertions made in the text, nor do they identify with requisite specificity the materials cited.

In his last chapter Kurtz forgoes his vow against speculation—already broken—and reconstructs the assassination. He hypothesizes that a shot that hit Kennedy in the back—he asserts at an *upward* angle—was fired from the second floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building. Here he whooshes across the line separating speculation from fantasy. His assertion that "the first two floors of the Depository were lower than the limousine at the time of the shots" requires a feat of levitation that is neither recorded on any film of the assassination nor testified to by any eyewitness.

Kurtz rightly calls attention to the need for professional historians to appraise the assassination of President Kennedy and the official investigations into the crime. Unfortunately, this book does not measure up to the demands of that gargantuan task.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JAMES H. LESAR